



# SYSTEM NEWS

March 2020 - COVID-19 Special Edition

## Letter from the CEO

Dear Cook County Health Friends and Partners,

While Cook County Health has been preparing for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) since January, our efforts to make plans to care for infected patients and the work to mitigate community spread increased substantially over the past few weeks.

On Monday, March 16, CCH put policies in place in order to protect the health and safety of our patients and our staff. Some of the measures include:

- Visitor restrictions
- Reducing the number of entrances to be able to more closely monitor those entering our facilities
- Screening patients and providing masks
- Using technology for routine visits
- Reducing some services such as elective surgical cases

You can find more information about the steps we are taking below.

I am incredibly proud of the work being done by CCH staff as we join local, federal and global health care organizations in the fight against COVID-19. Our staff at Stroger and Provident Hospitals, our clinics, correctional health and the public health department have been working tirelessly to ensure the health and safety of those we serve. I appreciate everyone's hard work and commitment to our patients.

While these are uncertain times, I am confident our staff will continue to rise to the occasion.

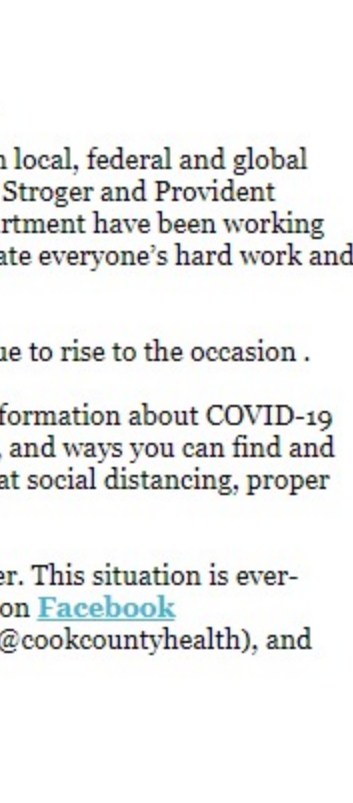
Along with health system updates, this newsletter will include the information about COVID-19 that you need, such as how to stay healthy, what to do if you get sick, and ways you can find and give help during this time. What we know from past experience is that social distancing, proper hand hygiene and common sense are critical.

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 requires all of us to work together. This situation is ever-changing and we encourage you to follow our social media channels on [Facebook](#) (@Cookcountyhhs), [Twitter](#) (@CookCityHealth), and [Instagram](#) (@cookcountyhealth), and our [website](#).

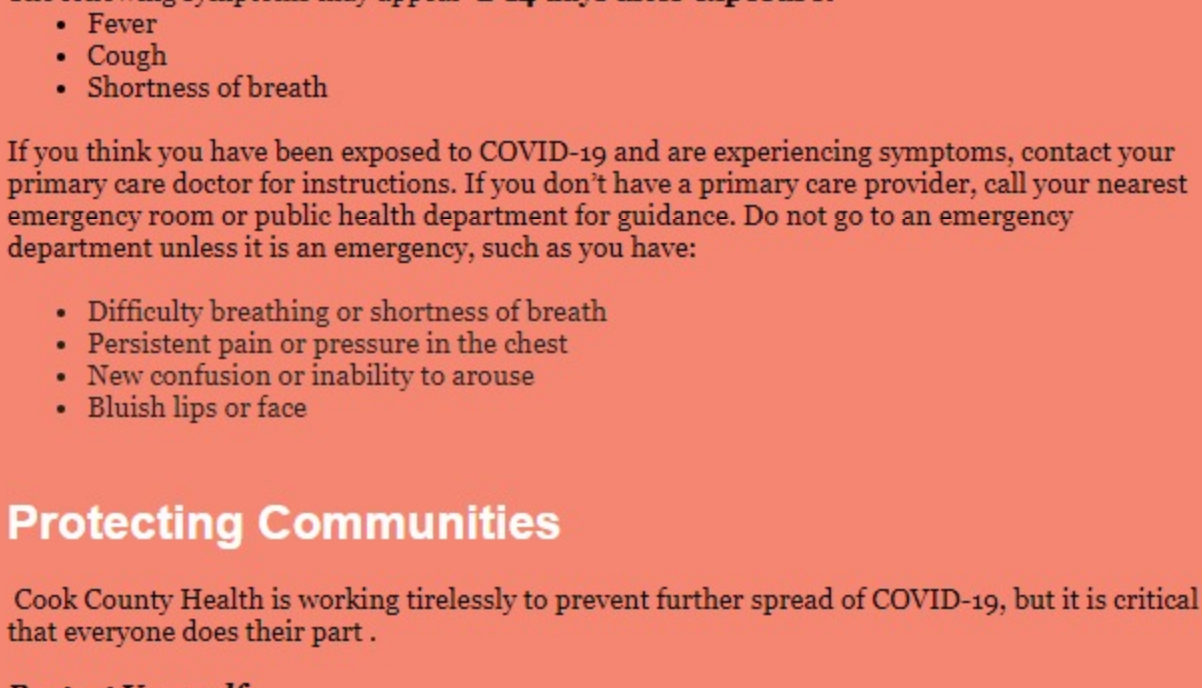
Sincerely,

*Debra D. Carey*

Debra D. Carey  
Interim CEO



## COVID-19 Information



COVID-19 has been categorized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization. It is a respiratory illness that can be spread from person-to-person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

About 80 percent of COVID-19 cases result in mild symptoms, including fever, cough and occasionally shortness of breath. People with mild cases are expected to recover without issue, and some may not be aware they are ever sick.

Every health care system in the U.S. is being challenged to respond to this pandemic and to work to control community spread. Cook County Health has developed a plan to reduce exposure risk and has outlined treatment plans for individuals who contract the virus.

The Cook County Department of Public Health, the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Chicago Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have been educating the public through the media about how the virus is spread, precautions residents should take and what is being done to slow the spread of the virus.

For the latest updates on COVID-19 in Cook County, visit [CCDPH's website](#).

## What to Do if You Think You May Have COVID-19

Reported illnesses for COVID-19 have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Senior citizens and individuals with pre-existing conditions are at a higher risk of contracting the disease.

The following symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure**:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and are experiencing symptoms, contact your primary care doctor for instructions. If you don't have a primary care provider, call your nearest emergency room or public health department for guidance. Do not go to an emergency department unless it is an emergency, such as you have:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

## Protecting Communities

Cook County Health is working tirelessly to prevent further spread of COVID-19, but it is critical that everyone does their part.

### Protect Yourself

The best way to prevent contracting COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you've been in a public place or after blowing your nose or coughing.
- If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

### Protect Your Community

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid large gatherings and practice social distancing.

### Follow the Law

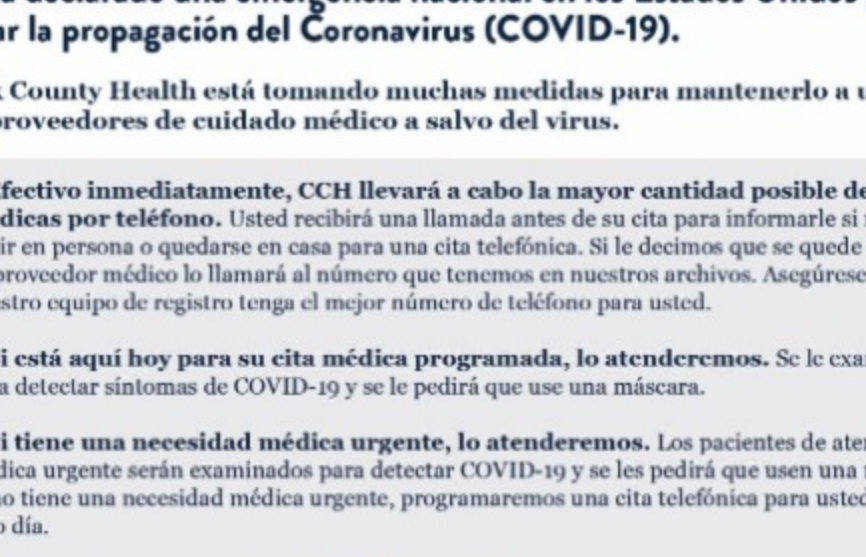
On March 20, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker issued a stay-at-home order, which began at 5 p.m. on March 21 and will continue through April 7. The action calls for Illinois residents to stay home as much as possible. Read more [here](#).

### Social Distancing Guidelines

The CDC has encouraged Americans to practice "Social Distancing," which is a public health practice that aims to prevent sick people from coming in close contact with healthy people in order to reduce opportunities for disease transmission. Currently, the recommendation is not to gather in groups larger than 10 people.

With COVID-19, the goal of social distancing is to slow the outbreak and to reduce the burden on health care systems and workers. This has been described as "flattening the curve," which generally refers to the potential success of social distancing measures to prevent surges in illness that could overwhelm health care systems.

Practicing social distancing means avoiding public gatherings and maintaining a distance of six feet from others.



## Visitor Restrictions and Campus Updates

To protect our patients and staff, Cook County Health will no longer be allowing visitors to inpatients at our hospitals. Exceptions that will be made on a case-by-case basis with the approval of hospital administration.

We ask individuals who are not sick and do not need to see a doctor to please stay home.

All patients and approved visitors who come to any CCH location will be provided a mask and screened as they enter.

In addition, to assist with patient screenings, we will be limiting access points to the hospital and professional building.

Please access the campus through these open entrances:

### Stroger Hospital

- Main campus parking garage
- Stroger Entrance 2
- Emergency department entrance (for emergency or trauma only)

### Professional Building

- Polk Street entrance

*Wait Service at Stroger Hospital and the professional building will be suspended until further notice. The self-pay parking lot on the north side of Stroger Hospital will be open.*

### Provident Hospital

- Main entrance
- Emergency Department entrance

## Clinic and Appointment Updates

### ATTENTION PATIENTS

Please read carefully.

### COVID-19 Prevention

**As you are aware the United States has declared a national emergency to prevent the further spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).**

Cook County Health is taking many steps to keep you and your healthcare providers safe from the virus.

• **Effective immediately, CCH will be conducting as many clinic appointments by telephone as possible.** You will get a call in advance of your appointment to let you know whether you will need to come in or stay home for a telephone appointment. If we tell you to stay home, your provider will call you at the number we have on file. Please make sure our registration team has the best phone number for you.

• **If you are here today for your scheduled appointment, we will see you.** You will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and asked to wear a mask.

• **If you have an urgent health need, we will see you.** Urgent care patients will be screened for COVID-19 and asked to wear a mask. If you do not have an urgent need, we will schedule a telephone appointment for you for another day.

• **If you have medical emergency, call 911.**

Cook County Health is asking for your patience and cooperation as we navigate this pandemic. Please know that we are making these changes to protect you from the virus.

#### About COVID-19

If you have traveled to China, Iran, South Korea, Europe, including the United Kingdom and Ireland or if you have been in close contact with someone known to have COVID-19, please immediately alert our staff. You will be screened for fever, cough and difficulty breathing. If you have these symptoms at home please call your healthcare provider or emergency room before going so they may prepare and protect others.

Older individuals (60+) and individuals with chronic disease such as hypertension and lung disease are more at risk for complications.

Social distancing is the best way to stop the virus from spreading. Staying home from work, school or other places like churches is important to protect yourself, your family and those at higher risk even if you are not sick.

**Visit [CDC.gov](#) for the latest recommendations on how to protect yourself and your family.**

[cookcountyhealth.org](#)

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### ATENCIÓN PACIENTES

Por favor lea cuidadosamente.

### Prevención de COVID-19

**Se ha declarado una emergencia nacional en los Estados Unidos para evitar la propagación del Coronavirus (COVID-19).**

Cook County Health está tomando muchas medidas para mantenerlo a usted y a sus proveedores de cuidado médico a salvo del virus.

• **Efectivo inmediatamente, CCH llevará a cabo la mayor cantidad posible de citas médicas por teléfono.** Usted recibirá una llamada antes de su cita para informarle si necesitará venir en persona o quedarse en casa para una cita telefónica. Si le decimos que se quede en casa, su proveedor médico lo llamará al número que tenemos en nuestros archivos. Asegúrese de que nuestro equipo de registro tenga el mejor número de teléfono para usted.

• **Si está aquí hoy para su cita médica programada, lo atenderemos.** Se le examinará para detectar síntomas de COVID-19 y se le pedirá que use una máscara.

• **Si tiene una necesidad médica urgente, lo atenderemos.** Los pacientes de atención médica urgente serán examinados para detectar COVID-19 y se les pedirá que usen una máscara. Si no tiene una necesidad médica urgente, programaremos una cita telefónica para usted para otro día.

• **Si tiene una emergencia médica, llame al 911.**

Cook County Health le pide su paciencia y cooperación mientras navegamos por esta pandemia. Tenga en cuenta que estamos realizando estos cambios para protegerlos del virus.

#### Sobre COVID-19

Si ha viajado a China, Irán, Corea del Sur, Europa, incluido el Reino Unido e Irlanda, o si ha estado en contacto cercano con alguien que se sabe que tiene COVID-19, por favor avise inmediatamente a nuestro personal. Se le examinará para detectar fiebre, tos y dificultad para respirar. Si tiene estos síntomas en casa, llame a su proveedor de cuidado médico o a la sala de emergencias antes de ir para que se puedan preparar y proteger a otros.

Las personas mayores (60+) y las personas con enfermedades crónicas como la hipertensión y la enfermedad pulmonar tienen más riesgo de complicaciones.

El distanciamiento social es la mejor manera de detener la propagación del virus. Quedarse en casa del trabajo, la escuela u otros lugares como la iglesia es importante para protegerse, proteger a su familia y a las personas con mayor riesgo, incluso si uno no está enfermo.

**Visite [CDC.gov](#) para obtener las últimas recomendaciones sobre cómo protegerse y proteger a su familia.**

[cookcountyhealth.org](#)

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## Donation and Giving Back Information

Many people have asked how they can help Cook County Health team members on the front lines who are combating COVID-19.

- The [Cook County Health Foundation](#) has set up a **coronavirus fund** which will be used to provide additional resources to our patients, families and communities. For more information and to donate, click [here](#).
- As COVID-19 continues to impact the communities we serve, we are committed to keeping staff safe. Because there is a nationwide shortage of critical personal protective equipment (PPE) across the country, we are currently accepting the following items:
  1. **Masks** – Both N95 and procedural masks will be accepted. These masks can be found across many industries and have been deemed appropriate to use in the health care setting by the CDC. Commonly found in the construction and landscaping industry among others, we will gladly accept any new and unused masks.
  2. **Hand sanitizer** – Personal sized hand sanitizer that has been unopened. CDC guidelines encourage sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol composition.
  3. **Eye protection** – This includes any new or unused goggles, safety glasses or face shields.
  4. **Disinfectant wipes** – All brands of unopened pre-moistened wipes are accepted.

If you have questions or are unsure if your item qualifies, please contact Dan Ruiz, Supply Chain, at [druiz@cookcountyhhs.org](#).

## Fresh Food Trucks Update

For the safety and well-being of everyone in the communities we serve, Cook County Health will not be holding its fresh truck food distribution on Thursday, March 26 at Oak Forest. We will continue to assess and see when we can resume food distribution. Please visit [our website](#) for information about the status of future dates.

Resources are still available for those in need through the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Visit the [Greater Chicago Food Depository](#) for more information.

The Greater Chicago Food Depository is also offering assistance for people who need help with eligibility information, applying or re-certifying for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid benefits. Call 773-843-5416 with questions. You can also apply online with the Department of Human Services at [abe.illinois.gov](#).

## Donate Blood



Looking for ways to help? Due to canceled drives, there is a severe blood shortage nationally. The Illinois Medical District will hold a drive every weekday from now until the end of March. The American Red Cross Chicago Chapter building is at 2200 W. Harrison St., Chicago. Drives are held 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Donating blood is a safe process. The Red Cross is following all proper protocol. Eligible and healthy donors are strongly encouraged to make an appointment soon, but please postpone your donation for 28 days following travel to any area with widespread COVID-19 cases, or if you've been diagnosed with or have had contact with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

For more information or to find a blood drive near you, visit [redcrossblood.org](#).

## Cook County Health Community Events Updates

To protect the health and safety of our staff and the communities we serve, Cook County Health has canceled any community events. This includes the Cook County Health Foundation Associate Board Trivia Night.

The Community Forums on Medicaid and Substance Use Disorder in suburban Cook County are also canceled. We value your input and would still like to hear from you. Organizations and individuals can submit written feedback or set up a 20-30 minute phone call with Cook County Health staff. Please contact Christie Edwards at [credwards@cookcountyhhs.org](#) or 312-864-4446 if you have any questions or to schedule a phone call. We're asking organizations to submit written feedback by **Monday, April 6**, using the **attached letter** as a guide.

The Harm Reduction Coalition has provided COVID-19 [resources](#).

## Online Resources for COVID-19 Updates

COVID-19 is a rapidly changing, global health issue. Accessing the latest information is critical to understanding. We recommend the following organizations:

- [Cook County Department of Public Health](#)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Illinois Department of Public Health](#)
- [Chicago Department of Public Health](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

## COVID-19 Questions?

**Cook County Department of Public Health (suburban Cook County residents)**

- Call 708-633-3319
- Email [ccdpd.covid19@cookcountyhhs.org](#)
- Hours of operation: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday thru Friday
- Sign up for AlertCook, Cook County's text alert system. Text "AlertCook" to 888-777.

**Illinois Department of Public Health**

- Call 800-889-3931
- Email [DPH.SICK@ILLINOIS.GOV](#)

**Chicago Department of Public Health (City of Chicago residents)**

- Call 312-746-4835
- Email [coronavirus@chicago.gov](#)
- Hours of operation: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., 7 days a week

## Cook County Health in the News

Cook County Health physicians have been educating the public through the media about how the virus is spread, precautions residents should take and what is being done to ensure minimal spread.



ABC 7 CHICAGO

### Infectious disease doctor answers your questions about COVID-19

March 12, 2020 – ABC 7 Chicago

Dr. Sharon Welbel talks about what makes COVID-19 a pandemic.



### Amid growing coronavirus cases, another number increasing: recoveries

March 5, 2020 – NBC News

Dr. Terry Mason, Chief Operating Officer, Cook County Department of Public Health, discusses recovery from COVID-19.



### Who should get tested for COVID-19?

March 4, 2020 – WGN Chicago

Dr. Rachel Rubin discusses the COVID-19 testing process and threshold.

### What You Need To Know About Coronavirus: Your Questions Answered By An Expert

February 28, 2020 – CBS 2 Chicago

Dr. Kiran Joshi stresses the risk of contracting coronavirus remains low.

Visit our website at [cookcountyhealth.org](#)

If you would like to invite a representative from CCH to attend a community event, please send an email to [events@cookcountyhhs.org](#).

To provide feedback on CCH Community News, update your contact information, or unsubscribe, please email Marcelino Garcia, Director of Community Affairs, at [mgarcia6@cookcountyhhs.org](#).